1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

From 1788 till the defeat and death of Tippu in 1799, Vīra Rāja IV helped the English in their wars against Mysore. Richter tells us that in 1792 when Lord Cornwallis had driven Tippu into Seringapaṭam and the British occupied that island, 'about 5,000 Coorgs who had been carried away by Tippu, with their wives and children, altogether about 12,000 souls, made their escape in the confusion that ensued and returned to their native country'.[1] Their old homes and lands were restored to the returning exiles, and they seem to have been accepted back into the Coorg fold without difficulty.

Vīra Rāja ruled till 1809 when he died, leaving behind only daughters. This gave rise to the inevitable succession disputes in which, in the end, Linga Rāja II, younger brother of the dead king, emerged triumphant in 1811. He ruled till his death in 1820 when he was succeeded by his twenty-year-old son Chikka Vīra Rāja (Vīra Rāja V). The latter was an incompetent and sensuous tyrant, and in 1834 he was deposed by the British who annexed Coorg. The rule of the Lingāyaṭ Rājas had come to an end.

V

Lewis Rice tells us that Coorgs formed the bulk of the armies of the Rājas.[2] He writes,

> these mountaineers (Coorgs) had a considerable share of intrepidity and perseverance; stratagem entered largely into their system of tactics, in war they were remarkable for their predatory habits, and their neighbours accused them on those occasions of adding cruelty to pillage. Like the modern guerilla, though they were unable to contend openly with regular troops, they intercepted their supplies, cut off their communications, and harassed them by surprises, a species of warfare admirably adapted to second the natural difficulties that a hilly country must present. An intimate knowledge of it, a strict obedience, and a singular devotion to their chief [i.e. Rāja] accompanied by a remarkable attachment to their wilds and an equal gallantry in defending them, may in some measure perhaps have compensated the want of military skill.[3]

The system of land tenure prevalent in Coorg directly contributed to the maintenance and development of the military tradition of Coorgs. Land revenue was the principal source of the wealth of the Rājas. The assessment was based on a survey and

[1] Op. cit., vol. iii, p. 327. [2] Ibid. [3] Op. cit., p. 326.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

to which people without sons go. Widowhood is the result of sins committed in a previous incarnation. Formerly, a widow's head was shaved, and she was not allowed to remarry. A married woman is regarded as an auspicious person, and articles associated with her, like flowers, vermilion, turmeric powder, glass bangles, and the marriage badge (*tāli*), are regarded as sacred and worshipped on certain occasions. A widow is more or less completely excluded from ritual.

It is necessary to note that the Coorg attitude to the widow is similar to the Brahmin's, though the differentiation between married woman and widow is not as thoroughgoing as among the Brahmin. But the similarity does make possible greater Sanskritization subsequently.

A married woman is a preferred type of person among Coorgs. Motherhood is a preferred condition and formerly the mother of ten children was entitled to have *mangala* performed in her honour.

Other types of preferred persons are the strong man who is also skilled in athletic sports, dancing, and fighting, and the magician who is usually also a doctor. Frequently several preferred traits were combined in the same man, making him doubly or trebly preferred. The preference expresses itself in custom and ritual.

It might be said that the general orientation of Coorg culture is martial. Frequently, customs and rites which appear to be taken over from neighbouring cultures are given a martial twist in Coorg. Competitive games like shooting at a coconut, and fighting for the possession of a coconut, and a collective hunt are introduced into every festival.

The harvest festival and the 'festival of arms' are both very significant in this connexion. It has been pointed out that the most important rites of the harvest festival are the cutting of sheaves, the eating of new rice grains, and the expression of a wish for plenty, but around these central rites are organized dancing and singing, competitive games, and a collective hunt. The incidental elements of the festival take up ten or eleven days while the main elements do not take up more than a day.

The completion of transplantation marks the end of a very arduous period in the cultivation of rice. Thereafter both the men and the oxen are relatively free till the beginning of harvesting. The 'festival of arms' comes at the end of the field season, and at this festival a Coorg resumes his contact with his weapons which

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181 796 411 he had put away at the beginning of the rainy season. The break in the continuity of the relationship between a man and, say, his gun, creates some 'awkwardness' and so the weapons are worshipped before being used. Later, a collective hunt is held.

224 778 [787] The Kaṇiya astrologer decides what periods of time are auspicious for worshipping the weapons and for cutting branches of the *poyyakaṇé* tree. He also decides when the village or *nāḍ* should have the collective hunt, in which direction the hunting party should go if they want the hunt to be successful, and, finally, the man who should lead the hunt.

226 The branches of the *poyyakaṇé* tree are used for making barriers which are erected in the rice-fields a few weeks after the end of transplantation, in order to catch the small fish which abound in the waterlogged fields during this part of the year. These fish are regarded as a great delicacy, and catching them is a favourite sport. [538] An improvident man is described in a proverb as one who lives on fish caught in the fields and on rice borrowed from neighbours at a ruinous rate of interest.

411 782 The weapons are cleaned and kept either in the sacred central hall or in the south-western room. They are marked with sandalwood paste. (Some Coorgs, like Brahmins on the western coast, mark their foreheads with sandalwood paste before worshipping a deity.) The weapons are worshipped with flowers, and a favourite flower used for worship on this occasion is the *tōku* which derives its name from the fact that it looks like a gun. Curried meat and cooked rice-flour are offered on plantain leaves to the weapons.

224 After dinner, the men put on their gowns, and assemble in the south-western room, or central hall. The head of the *okka* hands over to each his weapons and the latter salutes the former after receiving his weapons.[1] The headman says, as he stands over the weapons, 'Fight a tiger and boar by stepping aside the charging beast [i.e. avoid standing in the direct line of the charge], do not underrate your enemy, fight him face to face, stand by your friend, be obedient to the king, and do not forget God.'

The headman of the *okka* feeds the domestic dogs with cooked rice-flour. Then, just before the men of the *okka* leave the house for the village green he says, 'Let the horned deer and tusked boar cross my path.' Finally, he fires a shot in the direction of the jungle.

[857] [1] A boy who is old enough to hunt receives his first gun on this occasion.

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Several competitions are held on the village green. The men are asked to shoot at a target (*kuri*). A variant of this is shooting at a target while running (*ōṭu boḍi*). Three stout plantain stems are planted very close to each other and men are invited to cut through them with one stroke of the Coorg sword. Coorg youths struggle for the possession of a coconut (*téngé pōré*). There is a high-jump competition, and then there is a form of putting-the-shot: the competitors are required to throw a round stone backwards over their heads. He who throws it farthest wins.

All the adult males in every *okka* in the village or *nāḍ* have to co-operate in the collective hunt that is held after the 'festival of arms'. Each *okka* takes its dogs to the hunt. Every *dog* gets a portion of the meat of the animal killed. Every man taking part in the hunt gets a share, and those who hit the game first and second get an extra share each. He who first hit the game is also entitled to the animal's head, while the one who was the first to touch the killed animal's tail is given one of the front legs in addition to his ordinary share.

A man who shoots at an animal must not only hit it, but must draw blood as well. Blood, in this context, is referred to as *nambigé*, which means evidence. Failure to draw blood is punished: thorns are drawn across the bare buttocks of the unfortunate hunter before the assembled members of the hunt.

It was mentioned earlier that a man who killed a panther was entitled to have *nari mangala* performed on the village green, whereas he who killed a tiger was entitled to have it done on the *nāḍ* green.

It was pointed out earlier that Ayyappa, the son of Vishṇu and Shiva, becomes the hunting god *par excellence* in Coorg, roaming the forests at night, whistling to his pack of dogs. Vows are made to him before a hunt, and offerings of clay images of dogs and horses are made before his shrines in the jungle.

The general preference for the martial way of life expresses itself in belief, ritual, and myth. For instance, the Sanskritic belief that an eclipse is caused when the serpent Rāhu tries to devour the sun or moon provides the basis for a characteristically Coorg story. A one-eyed cobra lived in an anthill and near by was a creeper which had put forth an enormous gourd in which lived a hare. A strong wind blew the gourd off the creeper, and it broke when it hit the ground, setting the hare free. The cobra went after the running hare,

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trying to catch it. It chased the hare round the world. The moon was watching the chase from above and he dropped a rope to help the poor hare. The latter promptly climbed up the rope and settled down in the moon's lap. The cobra tries to catch its prey periodically, and whenever it does so, an eclipse occurs. When an eclipse is in progress Coorgs shout, 'O one-eyed Siddappa (cobra), set free, set free.' They shoot at the sky to make the cobra disgorge the hare.

The martial orientation of Coorg culture is not a recent phenomenon, nor does it seem to be in danger of dying out: in the last war over 1,300 Coorgs enlisted as soldiers, and the first Indian Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, General K. M. Cariappa, is a Coorg.

The *sanyasi*, the man who has renounced the world to pursue a life of prayer and contemplation, commands very great respect among Coorgs. He leads a celibate life, and in his case bachelordom does not constitute a drawback. The rules which apply to ordinary men do not apply to him. Preference for the *sanyasi* is found everywhere in India among Hindus.

ful fashioned turban, rather flat and large at top and covering a portion of the back of the neck. They are found in all shades of complexion, and when dressed in a costume they look very grand. The officers and students have now taken to the European style of dress in preference to their own. 291 [177]

The women are more conservative in their dress. It consists of a white or light blue cotton jacket with long sleeves fitting tight and close up to the neck. The skirt is white muslin or blue cotton stuff wrapped several times round and tied at the waist by a string. One end is brought over the bosom and knotted on the right shoulder. To give usefulness to the skirt, the other end is arranged into folds, which, contrary to the fashion of Hindu women, are gathered behind. The head is covered with a white muslin and coloured kerchief, one end of which encircles the forehead, and the four corners are joined together at the back, allowing the ends to fall over the shoulders.

Ornaments

The richness of the ornaments worn by a woman is the criterion to judge the status of a Coorg family. Glass, silver or gold bracelets are worn round their wrists. Their necks are adorned with chains of coral, pearls, or gold from which are suspended old Portuguese coins. They have ornaments for the nose and the rims of the ears. They wear gold rings or rings set with precious stones, and silver ones are worn on the toes. These are similar to those of Hindu women. The bridal dress adds to all this finery a many-coloured shawl which covers the body, and in the absence of a kerchief, golden hair ornaments, *chauribbi* are worn. Coorg women are skilful in embroidery work, with which they adorn their white kerchief and the seams and corners of the men's white cotton dress. They use red marking cotton and their patterns are very complicated and elegant, and are equally visible on both sides of the dress. 301 [554] [531]

Martial Spirit

The Coorgs have earned a high reputation for their martial prowess. In the words of Lt. Connor, they may be said to be armed from their childhood and the martial spirit is inculcated from the beginning of a man's life. War and agriculture seem their twin natural pursuits, and no harm arises from this happy combination of soldier and husbandman. They show no trace of the savage disposition which often characterises the martial class. They resemble the Nayars in some respects. Both are devoted to arms. Both are characterised by a gallant spirit of generosity and delicate sentiments of honour. The feelings which attach the highlander to the mountains and that fondness for their country which distinguishes subjects of small States are observed among the Coorgs. 181

Physical and Mental Characters

142 [181] The Coorgs are a hardy race. They have given proof of being brave soldiers and were much dreaded for their fierce intrepidity in encounters with their enemies. Military officers have commended their fitness for the formation of regiments. They are tall, muscular, broad-chested, strong limbed, and swift footed. Their colour is lighter than might be expected in this latitude. Their features are regular, often distinguished by an equiline nose, and finely chiselled lips, set off by a well trimmed moustache. 141 144 According to Holland, the Coorg is taller than the Yerava, has a finer nose, a larger head with a distinct tendency to brachycephalism, and a more perfect approach to orthognathism. Apart from anthropometric results, we have the contrast of colour between the fair (light brown) Coorg and the very dark skinned Yerava. The hair of the former is straight, while that of the Yerava is distinctly wavy, and the broad nose of the latter is accompanied by thick, slightly everted lips. The Coorgs and the Yeravas belong to two distinct ethnic types. The maximum, the minimum, and the average stature, cephalic and nasal indices are given below: 141

	Stature		Cephalic Index		Nasal Index	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Max.	184.5	166.0	90.7	93.2	100.0	74.0
Min.	149.1	131.5	66.5	70.9	46.3	50.9
Avg.	167.1	151 2	80.6	82.9	65.2	60.3

157 The intellectual and moral faculties of the Coorgs have been for ages dormant for want of opportunities. Consequently they have been observed to be ignorant and superstitious in common with people of lower cultures. [177] The march of civilization during the last 50 years has brought considerable improvement. English schools for boys and girls have been started in [187] important centres. It has been found that Coorg students are by no means backward in intellectual brightness and acquisitiveness. They have a high standard of morality in common with their brethren in other parts of India.

Language

19 Richter believes that there is a close relationship between the Kodagu and other Dravidian languages; but being neither cultivated beyond its colloquial use, nor possessing any original literature, it hardly deserves the distinction of being elevated into a special Dravidian language, as Bishop Caldwell does. It may be considered a more local dialect.

Conclusion

16 18 The Coorgs numbered 41,026 in the Census of 1931, 20,752 being males and 20,274 females. Their mode of life and pride of race impart to their whole bearing an air of manly independence and dignified self-assertion.

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well sustained by their peculiar and picturesque costume. In the words of Sir Erskine Perry they are by far the finest race he has seen in India in point of independent bearing, good looks, and all the outward signs of well-being.

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of the Jail, exercises the powers of a Magistrate over its inmates, who are superintended by a European Jailor.

The *Police*, with the exception of a small regular body of a miserable description in Mercara and Vírájenderpet, still maintains its rural character, as best adapted to the country.

According to the returns of the annual "Judicial Reports," the inhabitants of Coorg are neither remarkable[1] for their litigiousness, nor for an excess of criminality.

3. ADMINISTRATION OF REVENUE.

a. Land Revenue.

The Land Revenue constituted the chief source of the wealth of the Coorg Rájahs. It still forms the principal item in the annual income of Government. It will, therefore, be of interest to analyze the mode of assessment, peculiar to Coorg, for generations in use and still upheld by the British Government. The settlement was made in 1812[2] by Lingarájender, who caused the Shist accounts to be preserved in a kind of Domesday-Book in which all the vargas or farms are registered with great detail and accuracy, noting also the tenure under which each varga is held.

According to this *quasi settlement in perpetuity* we have to distinguish, besides the rentfree holdings, *four different kinds of tenures of land: Jamma, Ságu, Umbali and Jódi-tenure*, an arrangement nearly allied to what is called "Shivappa Naik's Shist" i. e. an assessment fixed in the time of Shivappa Naik, a polygar of Naggara.

The *Jamma-tenure*, from the Sanscrit "janma," a word conveying the meaning of "hereditary by birth," is the holding of the privileged class, called *Jamma-ryots*, comprising: Coorgs, Amma-Coorgs, Hegadas, Eimbokalas, Airis, Koyavas, Moplas and Gaudas. The light assessment of Rs. 5 per 100 butties of wet land with its accompanying Báné and Bariké was made originally on condition of military and general

[1] [Errata: this should read "remarkable ... neither." See Corrigenda, Cat. 116, p. 979 -- Analyst]

[2] [Errata: This should read "in 1813." -- Analyst]